REMARKS

The Office Action dated January 6, 2009, has been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims, and the following remarks, are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

Claims 1 and 4-25 are currently pending in the application, of which claims 1 and 11 are independent claims. Claim 1 has been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. No new matter has been added. Claims 1 and 4-25 are respectfully submitted for consideration.

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 4-12, and 14-25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Bancroft (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0165790) ("Bancroft") in view of Hull (U.S. Patent No. 6,976,032) ("Hull"). The Office Action acknowledged Bancroft fails to disclose or suggest all of the elements of the rejected claims, and consequently cited Hull to remedy Bancroft's deficiencies. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 1, upon which claims 4-10, 22, and 24 depend, is directed to a receptionist robot system. The system includes a traveling robot including autonomous traveling means for traveling autonomously and recognition means for recognizing a guest at least according to image information. The system also includes management database means adapted to communicate with the robot and provided with a database containing identification information to identify the guest recognized by the recognition means, the management database means being configured to retain and update individual personal

Application No.: 10/667,964

information and schedule information for identifying the guest. The guest is identified at least according to information obtained by the recognition means and management database means. The traveling robot further includes dialog means for communicating with the guest recognized by the recognition means and response means for determining the contents of communication with the guest according to an identity of the guest recognized by the recognition means and associated information from the management database means. The response means is configured to determine an action to conduct the guest to a prescribed facility according to the utilization status of the facility.

Claim 11, upon which claims 12-21, 23, and 25 depend, is directed to a receptionist robot system. The system includes a traveling robot adapted to travel autonomously. The system also includes management database means adapted to communicate with the robot and provided with a database adapted to retain and update individual personal information and schedule information for identifying a guest. The traveling robot includes recognition means for recognizing the guest at least according to image information, and response means for determining an action to conduct the guest recognized by the recognition means. The management database means is communicably connected with input means for inputting the schedule information and notification means for notifying the arrival of the guest to a host according to the action of the response means with respect to the guest. The traveling robot further includes dialog means for communicating with the guest recognized by the recognition means and response means for determining the contents of communication with the guest according

Application No.: 10/667,964

to an identity of the guest recognized by the recognition means and associated information from the management database means. The response means is configured to determine an action to conduct the guest to a prescribed facility according to the utilization status of the facility.

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Bancroft and Hull fails to disclose or suggest all of the elements of any of the presently pending claims.

Bancroft generally relates to methods for facilitating a retail environment. Bancroft provides a variety of processes that may be performed by a mobile retail system or a mobile robot system. In one example, Bancroft provides a method that includes providing a mobile system for operation in the retail environment, the mobile system including a processor portion, a memory portion storing retail data relating to retail activity, the processor portion storing data in the memory portion and retrieving data from the memory portion, an interaction portion, and a transport portion. The method further includes the mobile system traveling from at least a first location to a second location. The method additionally includes monitoring the retail environment by the mobile system. Finally, the method includes accepting input from a customer in the retail environment by the mobile system.

Bancroft fails to disclose or suggest, "wherein the response means is configured to determine an action to conduct the guest to a prescribed facility according to the utilization status of the facility," as recited in claim 1 or "the response means is

Application No.: 10/667,964

configured to determine an action to conduct the guest to a prescribed facility according to the utilization status of the facility," as recited in claim 11.

Bancroft's robot is, as noted above, directed to facilitating a retail environment. Accordingly, even if Bancroft's robot could be viewed as having some "receptionist" characteristics as that term would be broadly understood (not admitted), it is not a corporate receptionist robot, and does not have the functions of directing guests to facilities such as rooms.

Indeed, it is respectfully submitted that because Bancroft is directed to a robot used in a retail environment, Bancroft's robot is designed for and presented with a totally different set of tasks from that addressed by various embodiments of the claimed receptionist robot system. For example, the traveling robot of claim 1 conducts a guest to a prescribed facility **according to the utilization status of the facility**, but no such consideration is made when conducting a retail customer to a prescribed part of a shop. Furthermore, the system of claim 1 includes a database that retains schedule information for identifying a guest. A retail customer does not typically visit a shop on appointment, and Bancroft's robot does not look up any schedule when dealing with a retail scustomer.

The closest similarity in Bancroft appears to be where Bancroft's robot directs a customer to the location of a particular desired good within a retail store. This location, however, is not properly considered a facility, and the robot in Bancroft is not really directing the customer to the location based on a utilization status of the facility.

Application No.: 10/667,964

In addition to the features discussed above (which can relate to both claims 1 and 11), claim 11 further recites, "wherein the management database means is communicably connected with ... notification means for notifying the arrival of the guest to a host according to the action of the response means with respect to the guest." These features of claim 11 are not disclosed in the cited art.

The Office Action cited various portions of Hull (having acknowledged that Bancroft does not disclose such features). It should be noted that Hull may appear to have some similarities to certain aspects of the features identified.

Hull generally relates to a networked peripheral for visitor greeting, identification, biographical lookup, and tracking. According to Hull, a visitor kiosk for the capture and storage of personal information about visitors is placed at the entry point to a facility being monitored. Each visitor signs in at the kiosk. Their business card and an image of their face can be scanned by the kiosk. If they do not have a business card, their name and company can be entered manually. They also enter the name of the person they are visiting and the purpose for their visit. The person they are visiting is notified of the arrival of the visitor by email or by voice telephone. The data about the visitor is stored locally or remotely. Automatic lookups of various information about the visitor are performed and communicated to the person being visited. A network interface allows users to enter information about visitors they are expecting to arrive. A telephone interface is provided for input of voice greetings as well as checking on the arrival status of visitors.

Application No.: 10/667,964

Thus, for example, if the person being visited is considered the "host" and the person visiting is considered the "guest," it would appear that Hull mentions some feature that might be thought to correspond to the claimed notification means (not admitted that this is the case). It would not, however, have been obvious to include such a notification means in the retail sales robot of Bancroft.

One reason it would not be obvious to include such a feature in the retail sales robot of Bancroft, is that a retail sales robot does not normally have to deal with the issue of visitors coming to see particular people. Indeed, Bancroft nowhere envisions such an application for Bancroft's robot, and there is nothing in Bancroft that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to expect that Bancroft's robot would be improved by inclusion of the additional features of being able to tell someone that a visitor has arrived. Thus, for each of the reasons set forth above, the rejections of claims 1 and 11 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Claims 4-10, 12, and 14-25 depend respectively from, and further limit, claims 1 and 11. Thus, each of claims 4-10, 12, and 14-25 recites subject matter that is neither disclosed nor suggested in the combination of Bancroft and Hull. It is, therefore, respectfully requested that the rejection of claims 4-10, 12, and 14-25 be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejected claim 13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Bancroft in view of Hull, as applied to claim 11, and further in view of Chen (U.S. Patent No. 6,144,180) ("Chen"). The Office Action acknowledged that the combination of Bancroft and Hull still did not disclose all of the features of claim

Application No.: 10/667,964

13, and cited Chen to remedy such deficiencies. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 13 depends from and further limits claim 11. At least some of the deficiencies of Bancroft and Hull with respect to claim 11 have been discussed above. Chen does not remedy such deficiencies, and consequently the combination of Bancroft, Hull, and Chen does not disclose or suggest all of the elements of any of the presently pending claims.
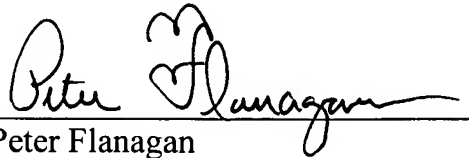
Chen relates to a mobile robot, but does not address the receptionist features discussed above, which is not surprising, because Chen was cited for other reasons. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that the combination of Bancroft, Hull, and Chen fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of claim 13, and it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claim 13 be withdrawn.

For the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that each of claims 1 and 4-25 recites subject matter that is neither disclosed nor suggested in the cited art. It is, therefore, respectfully requested that all of claims 1 and 4-25 be allowed, and that this application be passed to issuance.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, Applicants' undersigned representative at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

Application No.: 10/667,964

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Flanagan
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 58,178

Customer No. 32294
SQUIRE, SANDERS & DEMPSEY LLP
14TH Floor
8000 Towers Crescent Drive
Vienna, Virginia 22182-6212
Telephone: 703-720-7800
Fax: 703-720-7802

PCF:dlh